Jackson, Citing Need To See Ray,

Ray plotted another escape attempt this spring, NBC says. Page 2. 8/10/78

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Civil Rights leader Rev. Jesse Jackson says he has an obligation to find out from James Earl Ray if there was a conspiracy in the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., and he has charged the press with helping discover the truth.

Mr. Jackson will meet with Ray today at Brushy Mountain Penitentiary to discuss Ray's role in the 1968 assassination.

Mr. Jackson, speaking at a press conference last night at McGhee Tyson Airport, said it would be "cowardly to avoid

'It would be irresponsible to ignore . . . (Ray)'

Ray and the conspirators." Mr. Jackson is in town with Mark Lane, Ray's lawyer; Rev. James Lawson, the Memphis minister who solicited Dr. King's help during the strike, now a pastor in Los Angeles, Calif., and Alvin Poussaint, a board member of Operation PUSH (People United to Save Humanity).

"It would be irresponsible to ignore a personal letter from the man most associated with the murder of Dr. King," Mr. Jackson said, referring to a letter Ray wrote last month urging black leaders across the country to support his bid for a new trial.

"There is sufficient weight in the case for the press to do some investigative reporting in the Watergate spirit," Mr. Jackson said. "There's enough smoke to be fire somewhere."

Other reasons Mr. Jackson listed last night for seeing Ray today are:

- **Ray is a "political prisoner,"** Mr. Jackson said. To declare him insane "is a way of protecting somebody."
- **President Carter** cannot ignore Ray. "He has a moral obligation to inquire," Mr. Jackson said. "President Carter said he did not have legal jurisdiction of Ray in Tennessee — that it is a matter for Tennessee. He doesn't have jurisdiction over Moscow either, but he could express a moral concern. We're asking that he be consistent."
- **"As long as** these forces of evil (conspirators) are operative," Mr. Jackson said, "my own safety and others is jeopardized. The lives of those who raise the same issues as Dr. King did are in

'. . . my own safety and others is jeopardized. . . I can't pursue happiness'

jeopardy. I can't pursue the happiness that has been guaranteed." Mr. Jackson said his life has been threatened. "It is an occupational hazard to those who must raise the issue for democracy and justice.

- **"We need to know** the role of the FBI in the assassination," he said. "To know its role of omission or commission is in our national interest. Tyranny can only be healed if it is first exposed, then fought."

Challenges Press To Help 'Discover Truth'

- **Mr. Jackson said** Ray's letter shows Ray was involved in the assassination at some level and is willing to share the information he has. Ray may merely be a diversion or a sacrificial lamb."
- **"I have a deep** emotional need to see the man involved in killing Dr. King," he continued. "The traumatic experience of watching an assassination is not easily forgotten."

Mr. Jackson said he is appealing for Ray to come to trial and that all the evidence Ray has be made public. "There is a legal obligation to respond to this consitutional request," he said.

Mr. Jackson said Ray is the "Jack Ruby" of the situation. "He and the FBI files are the link," he continued. Mr. Jackson said without Ray, the situation would be even more difficult to prove.

"It is most difficult to revive public interest in the Ray case," Mr. Jackson told The News-Sentinel later. "The media is convinced there is nothing to be found.

"Government continues to issue reports saying there is no substantial evidence. But that is a bad source, because Government — particularly the FBI — may very well be the primary agency responsible for Dr. King's death."

Referring to U.S. Ambassador Andrew Young's statement about political prisoners, Mr. Jackson said people are reacting more to embarrassment during SALT negotiations rather than the accuracy of the statement.

"In 1945 this country arrested 63,000 Japanese citizens and put them in concentration camps and took away their property," he said. "They were clearly political prisoners."

"In 1963, 21,000 citizens were in jail for fighting for the public accommoda-

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tions bill, basic Civic Rights legislation." Mr. Jackson said the bill culminated in the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

"In 1971, 13,000 antiwar protesters were arrested en masse by John Mitchell and Richard Nixon for protesting American war policy.

"Now," he said, "there are 400,000 U.S. prisoners. More than 300,000 are black or brown or poor. Thousands are there because they can't afford to pay bail bond. Thousands are there because policies like benign neglect denied them job training and reduced their life options.

"The political issue is real," Mr. Jackson continued. "It is a national challenge to change it. One reason is if a young person goes to a state university four years, it costs less than $20,000. If he goes to the penitentiary, it costs $50,000 to $100,000. It's cheaper to educate and employ people than to leave them ignorant and incarcerated."

Mr. Jackson said a trial should determine Ray's guilt or innocence. "A political decision was made to put him in jail without an open trial," Mr. Jackson said. "The decision was made behind closed doors. Someone's political judgment put him in jail forever without a trial. That's a political decision."